

Introduction to the edition

The source for this edition of J. S. Bach's St. Mark Passion (BWV 247) is Picander's libretto published in *Ernst-Scherzhaffte und Satyrische Gedichte*, part three (Leipzig, 1732), which gives the text for a performance of the work on Good Friday 1731 in Leipzig. Bach subsequently slightly revised it for further performances in 1732 and 1744.

Suggesting a book of words for the sole source for a musical edition is a sign of the central problem of the St Mark Passion: there is no score. There was, but it was destroyed during World War II, perhaps during the bombing of Dresden in 1944. No-one seems to have copied this score in the 200 years of its existence.

To date, at least twenty realisations of Bach's St. Mark Passion have been made, displaying some interesting extremes of recomposition (re-writing almost the entire work) on the one hand, or of caution (leaving the recitatives and crowd choruses spoken, or in a form rewritten by another 18th-century composer) on the other – or something in between. I decided that an integrated work might best be achieved by accepting various scholarly conclusions concerning the re-use in the St. Mark of material borrowed (or 'parodied') from other works – and then composing the missing music myself, in a way that complements its surroundings as seamlessly as possible.

Interest in the possibility of resurrecting the St Mark Passion started in earnest in 1964, with the Diethard Hellmann edition of choruses, arias and chorales. This and other scholarly work has shown with certainty that certain pivotal choruses and arias can be found in other works of Bach, chiefly in the Trauer-Ode BWV 198, which provides the music for the opening and closing choruses of the passion, and the arias 'Verstummt' (III), 'Wie starb der Heldin' (V) and 'Der Ewigkeit' (VII). I have also made use of the instrumental recitative 'Der Glöcken bebendes Getön' (IV) and 'An dir, du Vorbild' (VI), justified only by the beauty of the music.

In the music for the 16 chorales, I have followed scholarly consensus except in the chorale at the end of Part One, 'Ich will hier bei Dir stehen', where I felt a chorale prelude would provide a musical paragraph end. Here, I have used the harmonisation and flute obbligato from the final movement of BWV 161 ('Komm, du süßes Todesstunde') interlaced with my own music for double reeds.

As for the remaining arias, there is less certainty. For movement No. 25 'Falsche Welt' I have used the opening aria of BWV 54, 'Widerstehe noch der Sünde', and for No. 48 'Angenehmes Mordgeschrei', the aria 'Jesus soll mein erstes Wort' from BWV 171/IV 'Gott, wie dein Name' (also found in BWV 205/IX). In common with other reconstructions, the crowd chorus No. 56 'Pfui, pfui dich' uses music from the Christmas Oratorio: BWV 248 part 5/III 'Wo ist der neugeborne König?'

After that, there remains the story-telling, in the form of recitative and crowd choruses. In contrast to some other versions of the St Mark Passion, these I have composed myself. Some advantages arose: the keys of most of the choruses and arias are fixed within narrow limits (the main source of borrowed music, BWV 198, is mostly in B minor). It is essential to have recitatives which lead naturally in and out of these tonal 'pillars' and composing is the only way to achieve this. Occasionally the text of St. Mark is identical with that of St. John or St. Matthew, and some editors borrow music from these other passion settings. But Bach does not borrow from his John for his Matthew, or *vice*

versa. He applies new creativity to the same text. So perhaps the same should happen in the St. Mark.

Until or unless Bach's own score is discovered somewhere, we will not know the full identity of the St. Mark Passion. But some of its unique character is already evident, from the balance of narrative to commentary, so different from the John and Matthew Passions: only six arias, but 16 chorales, which with the recitation bring to the fore the directness and simplicity of Mark's narrative. And while we may miss some of the sophistication and wizardry of the John and the Matthew, the concentration of the Passion story into little more than two hours suits modern audiences well.

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